

dialogue

The Staff Newsletter of the Ministry of Community and Social Services

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Native Circle welcomes you

If you are a native person working within the Ontario Public Service, the Ontario Native Employment Equity Circle (ONEEC) welcomes your participation.

The Circle is a group for First Nations people and was founded in 1990. It is for aboriginal OPS employees and aims to address issues that affect the employment of native peoples in the Ontario government; it is also a support network.

The Circle works toward creating an OPS that is more sensitive and aware of native issues and concerns. Members are management, unionized and contract OPS employees from all provincial ministries and agencies.

There are currently about 200 active members in the Circle, although the 1986 "L-Count" survey indicates that there are closer to five times as many native people working in the OPS.

The Circle meets every second month on the third Thursday and Friday at alternating locations. The next gathering is in June.

If you would like more information, contact Priscilla George,



spokesperson for the Circle, at the Ministry of Education and Training (tel. 416-314-6204; fax 325-2927).

Equity workshops for managers begin

Now that Bill 79 is about to be proclaimed, employment equity workshops for managers and supervisors have begun in MCSS.

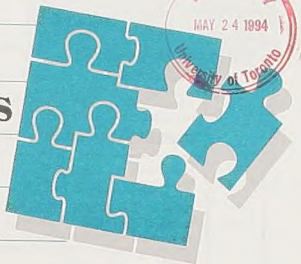
The first of a series of four workshops on Bill 79 — Canada's most progressive law for employment equity — took place in Sudbury April 6th. Workshops are also being held in Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Kingston, Toronto, London and Windsor, as well as Kenora, Smiths Falls and Picton.

The workshops are conducted by the ministry's Employment Equity Office trainers and all managers and supervisors must take the four workshops before the end of the calendar year.

"Getting our ministry on track with employment equity is an important role for front-line managers — the people with responsibility for hiring and promotion," says Deputy Minister Rosemary Proctor. "These workshops are designed to give managers and supervisors the practical tools and the knowledge they need to establish equity in our workplace."

"Bill 79 — Embracing the Challenge" is the first of the workshop series and is aimed at giving managers some practical steps toward employment equity. Second is "Successfully Managing Employment Equity in Times of Constraints," which will help managers to meet their performance contract responsibilities for employment equity. Third is "Employment Equity — A Catalyst for Organizational Change," about organizational change and how the change process can assist in transforming the workplace into one that values and accommodates diversity. Fourth is "Leadership in a Diverse Environment," which includes practical solutions to managing cultural, religious and social diversity issues.

These workshops are being held as a result of consultations that were held with senior managers last December; they are aimed at responding to training needs identified by managers themselves at that time.



Questions about the ESR

by the ESR Communications Working Group

Q How do you know that something is actually going to happen with the recommendations in your ESR Final Report?

A This is one of our "Frequently-Asked Questions." We, the Employment Systems Review Task Force members, have compiled quite a list of these questions and comments as we have been presenting the ESR project to staff in just about every office, facility and branch in MCSS. And though we seem to reach more managers than bargaining unit or front-line staff so far, we are accomplishing one of our objectives:

encouraging involvement.

We've had some very good discussions with people from all over Ontario. Many times the participants told us that they had very little information about the ESR. By the end of the presentation, not only did they know more about it, they actually

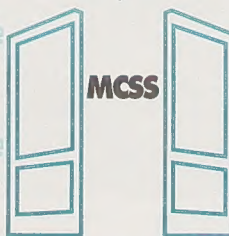
thought it was a very interesting project.

Here are some more examples of frequently-asked questions and comments (we'll deal with most of these in our final report):

"Aren't there a lot of women in the ministry already?"

"Isn't under-representation caused by a lack of education?"

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Employment Systems
Review

Making the Mississauga office more efficient

by Julia Naczynski

The Mississauga Area Office has been on the cutting edge of better business practices (BBP) in our ministry.

The area office set up its own BBP committee in January 1993, just a few weeks after the ministry-wide corporate BBP Unit was established at Queen's Park. It's a model from which other offices in the ministry can draw ideas.

The objectives of the Mississauga group were to look at all program, administrative and financial processes to see if some could be streamlined or even automated,

says Vince Tedesco, who chaired the original committee and is its current chair.

"We identified areas and issues to look at that were specific to the Mississauga Area Office," says Vince.

Membership included the two community services managers, program supervisors, the systems manager and finance manager, among others. "The benefit for us is that it gave us a forum in the area office that

was cross-program," says Vince. "We had finance and program people at one table, where we could come to understand each

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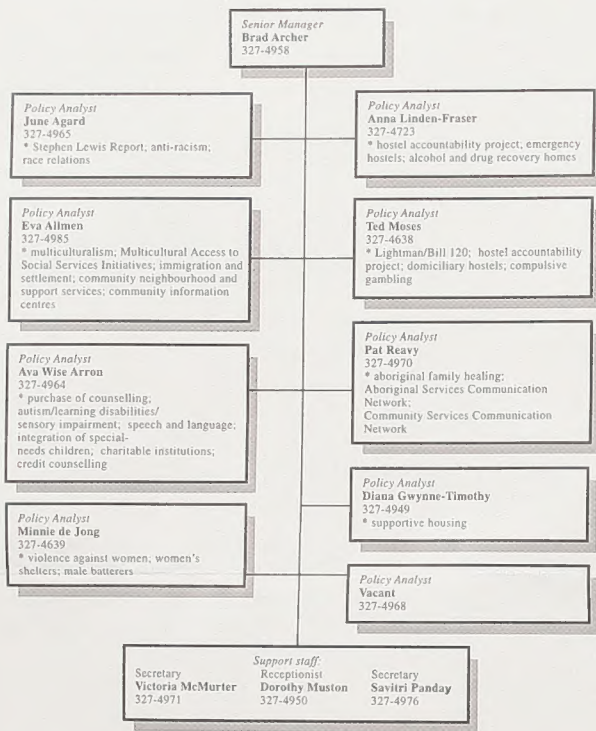
— part of a
continuing series on
better business
practices in MCSS

Community Services Unit

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MCSS
Restructuring

- part of the Children, Family and Community Services Division
- responsible for policy development, program design and implementation planning for community-based services for adults and families
- liaises with other branches/divisions/ministries/governments/community services
- supports program delivery through policy clarification and information-sharing



Social contract days for managers

Management and excluded employees will take 63/4 unpaid leave days each in this fiscal year and the next for social contract purposes. For the 1993-94 fiscal year just ended, it was 8.6 days.

For social contract purposes, these employees are represented by the Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario (AMAPCEO).

The number of days required of employees in AMAPCEO is different from those represented by OPSEU because of the high value of OPSEU's classification grievance moratorium. Also, some employees in OPSEU will take compensating time off instead of being paid overtime.

For OPS staff who are in the non-bargaining unit, the unpaid days to be taken are: in 1993-94, 10 days; in 1994-95 and in 1995-96, 8 days in each year.

For more information, the OPS social contract Infoline can be reached at 1-800-656-3643, or in Toronto, 416-327-3179.

Services to disabled people report

Pathway to Integration, a report that reviews services for Canadians with disabilities, is now available.

This report is part of the Mainstream 1992 review of services done for federal, provincial and territorial ministers of social services in Canada. The purpose is to develop a strategic framework to help integrate Canadians with disabilities in the mainstream of Canadian society.

The report is available in English and French, on cassette and computer disk, in Braille and on video in sign language. It is available at the MCSS Library and Learning Resources. You may also contact Alexandra Gibson of Corporate Policy at 416-325-5392.

Making Mississauga more efficient

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other's issues and work out a resolution."

Among the streamlining processes the committee has looked at are the mail and distribution systems, protocols for using DEC, development of an automated budget analysis spreadsheet, bring-forward systems, and setting up filing standards in order to decentralize the filing system.

Small working groups would be put together to work on specific problems and return to the committee with proposals for improvements.

"We had never really taken stock of the things we do manually that could be automated," notes Vince. "And we had never really looked at how distribution processes should be done or developed protocols for them."

The committee studied the office's distribution system: how material was being logged, how mail was handled, the use of e-mail. "We gave serious thought about who needs to be copied on what in the office," says Vince. "When it came to distribution, we tended to over-copy." Now people are copied on a need-to-know basis; staff reply only to the sender unless others

on the distribution list need to know; files are purged on a regular basis. Tips on how to better use computers and DEC are shared among staff "so we can make the best use of the capacity of our equipment," says Vince.

The committee helped set up an area-wide standard-response binder so that staff can send consistent responses to contentious issues and briefing notes. "That way, people aren't starting from scratch."

The committee also reviewed the forms the office was using to update them so they reflect current requirements, and to avoid duplication. "Different units might use differing forms to accomplish the same thing."

The Mississauga Area Office is sharing its ideas with the corporate BBP Unit through Elizabeth Wagle, a program supervisor who is the office's BBP representative.

Improving your business practices is an on-going process, notes Vince. "It keeps on evolving because automation is constantly changing."

Questions about the ESR

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"If people don't always self-identify, how do we know who we're hiring?"

"All the new openings going to designated group members will just make people more frustrated."

"What about external barriers that discourage people from applying?"

"I don't want to be hired just because I'm in a designated group."

"Front-line staff aren't interested in this issue."

"What about other groups who experience disadvantages, why aren't they suitable for designation?"

"Sounds like reverse discrimination to me..."

and,

"How are we supposed to implement employment equity during periods of downsizing and constraint?"

We have tried to record as much feedback and answer as many questions as possible. We know that the final report which the task force will present will respond to a number of these questions, concerns and suggestions.

The quality of the report will depend on the number of people contributing to the ESR beyond the task force, and the commitment to see it carried through. A successful ESR relies on the participation of as many staff, from different classifications, occupations and locations, across Ontario as possible. With your involvement, we can ensure the report is fully used for the successful implementation of Employment Equity in MCSS.

You may send further comments, suggestions and questions to the project assistant on DEC at ESR_PROJECT, or by mail to ESR Project, 17th floor, 56 Wellesley St. W. Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1E9.



Employment Systems
Review

The Adoption Resource Exchange: helping children and families find each other

By Julia Naczynski

The spring Adoption Resource Exchange (ARE) was held at Queen's Park April 24-27.

Every April and October, the ministry's Adoption Unit hosts a gathering of adoption and adoption disclosure workers from the more than 50 children's aid societies (CASs).

One purpose of the ARE is to help find adoptive homes for children in Ontario. Some children who are presented at ARE have been featured in *Today's Child*, a syndicated column prepared by the ministry and published in most of the daily and community newspapers in the province; others are children who are about to become Crown wards and available for adoption.

The first day of ARE is an opportunity for "adoption-ready" families — those who have had a home study prepared by their local CAS and who are ready to adopt — to view photos and videos of available children, meet adoption workers and to submit their names to the appropriate CAS to indicate their interest in the children they see,

afterward, the adoption workers work together to facilitate inter-agency placements. The Ontario Room in the Macdonald Block was packed for this event.

The next two days were an opportunity for CAS adoption workers to view the children and suggest any potential adoption-ready families for them, as well as to hold training and information seminars to exchange the latest views on adoption, foster parenting and other adoption-related subjects; more than 40 adoption workers attended. The fourth day was a discussion of adoption disclosure with CAS workers who provide adoption disclosure services around the province.

Pat O'Brien, the assistant registrar with our Adoption and Operational Services Unit, hosted the adoption worker meeting, with technical and administrative assistance from Maureen Colman, adoption support clerk.

These stories are a summary of the workshop and seminar activities during ARE.

New video shows aspects of adoption reunion

At the ARE adoption disclosure day, social workers viewed a brand-new video aimed at a specialized audience: people who are considering an adoption reunion. "Adoption reunion" is the first contact between a birth relative (most often the mother, less often the father or other relative) and an adopted adult. Reunions are often arranged through a children's aid society or with the help of the ministry-operated Adoption Disclosure Register.

"Pushing Through the Mirror" was produced by Brian Damude, himself a birth father who recently experienced reunion with a daughter who had been adopted at infancy. The 70-minute video was produced for the Metropolitan Toronto Children's Aid Society.

Brian narrates the video, which shows frank and moving interviews with some 40 adoptees, birth parents, adoption parents and siblings. It cautions viewers about the pitfalls of unrealistic expectations as well as the joys of reunion, covers the emotional aspects of this significant event and offers advice — all from people who have been through the experience. The overall message is that this is largely a positive experience. The video, which is meant to be shown by social workers, counsellors and others involved in adoption and others involved in adoption, can be purchased for \$40 from the society through Disclosure Services, 33 Charles St. East, Toronto, Ont. M4Y 1R9 (416-924-4646).

A family for life: the goal of permanency planning

All too often, children in the care of a child welfare agency are bounced from foster home to foster home, unable to settle in one place with one family, for various reasons. They live in a state of limbo — unable to live with their birth parents or extended family, but not legally free to be adopted.

"Permanency planning" is a process of carrying out, within a brief time-limited period, activities that will help children live in families that offer continuity and the chance of establishing life-time relationships.

By the time a child becomes a Crown ward (which makes the child legally free to be adopted), s/he has probably lived in three to five different foster homes, adoption workers learned at one Adoption Resource Exchange workshop. Permanency planning needs to be a consideration from the day a child comes into the care of a children's aid society, the workers agreed.

This concept is favoured by many adoption workers — including many of those attending the ARE — because it provides much-needed stability to children whose lives have likely been marked by upheaval. But there are many barriers to the concept, the workers decided in a brain-storming session.

Barriers include:

- the misconception that permanency planning always results in a child going to adoption. It can also mean returning to the parents or to extended family members;
- a bias against adoption. The current philosophy is to preserve the family at all costs, and this may not be in the best interests of the child, the workers agreed;
- access orders that prevent permanency planning. An access order is granted in court and gives the birth parents the right to see the child. This can sometimes keep the child in a state of emotional flux, unable to attach to other people such as foster parents;
- the courts' reluctance to accept the concept of fostering with a view to adoption, which is foster-parenting a child



Ministry co-ordinator of Crown ward review and private and international adoptions Rich Partridge makes a point during discussion of access orders.

with the possibility of later formally adopting the child.

Rich Partridge, co-ordinator of Crown ward review and of private and international adoptions for the ministry, agreed that permanency planning is not well-practiced in some Crown ward cases. Access orders are granted to parents about 60 per cent of the time, and that rate has not changed in the past five years, he said; some judges grant it as much as 90 per cent of the time.

Crown wards with access cannot be adopted and most of these wards are in foster placements that, on average, change every 18 months, Rich indicated. The Crown Ward Review Unit issues directives to CASs to review permanency planning in some cases and to have access orders reviewed by the courts. This is particularly the case where access does not appear to be in the best interests of the child, or is not being used, he said.

Rich agreed with the workers that some judges may not give sufficient consideration to the appropriateness of access orders, which can be an impediment to permanency planning. He suggested that perhaps family court judges need more education and guidelines about access orders, similar to the sentencing guidelines that are given to criminal court judges, to help them make decisions that represent the best interests of the child.

Adoption disclosure update

There is an ever-growing demand for adoption disclosure services provided by the ministry and the children's aid societies it funds. The ministry operates a province-wide Adoption Disclosure Register for the purpose of voluntary matching of adult adoptees, birth parents, birth grandparents and siblings; the register may also search for birth relatives on behalf of adult adoptees.

A full day was set aside at the Adoption Resource Exchange on April 27 to provide adoption disclosure workers from children's aid societies across the province with updates on legislation and guidelines. Adoption and Operational Services

manager Colette Kent and policy analyst Joan Belford told about 80 workers that "matches" of birth relatives and adoptees made by the provincial Adoption Disclosure Register have almost doubled from four years ago, even though the number of staff has been cut in half. This is partly because the task has gotten easier — more and more people have voluntarily put their names on the register.

Colette provided an update on changes that have been implemented within the current legislation, while Joan provided an update on proposed legislative change.

The ministry is pursuing amendments to

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Adoption and Operational Services manager Colette Kent and policy analyst Joan Belford outline possible legislative changes to adoption disclosure.

We'll conclude our coverage of the Adoption Resource Exchange in the June issue with a story about attention deficit disorders.

Technology Tips_

From Information Systems Branch

Editor's Note: In this issue we begin a new feature, "Technology Tips," a quick-reference guide to making the ministry's technology work better for you. It's written by staff from Information Systems Branch.

Effective electronic document distribution: keep it simple

A variety of printers, with varying capabilities, are in use across the ministry. Many of these printers are unable to print the scalable fonts and sophisticated graphics often found in documents created in some versions of WordPerfect and other software packages.

Therefore, documents to be broadly distributed should, whenever possible, be created this way: Use a basic 10-pitch Courier font to print portrait on a single side of standard-sized 8-1/2-inch by 11-inch paper ("portrait" means the 8-1/2 inches is

the width of the paper). The document should not contain tables or graphics.

When you must share sophisticated documents, please include appropriate printing instructions in the e-mail "cover note" that goes out with the attached document.

Please be sure that your telephone number appears in your e-mail header (see your systems officer for instructions) so that those offices that are unable to print your document may contact you for a paper copy or for further instructions.

Ottawa's Employer of the Year



Presentation to Ottawa's Employer of the Year: from left to right are manager of direct services Seville Clarke and area manager Pierre Lalonde of the Ottawa Area Office, director of social assistance programs Mary Kardos Burton, Mark Veoudry of ADUP Portable Sign Solution and VRS counsellor Jeanne Riendeau.

Every year, the Ottawa Vocational Rehabilitation Services office selects an employer who has hired a VRS client to recognize and honour the employer's commitment to getting people into the workforce. The 1993 Employer of the Year was ADUP Portable Sign Solution, a business founded and operated by Mark and Sylvie Veoudry.

ADUP created its unique portable sign three years ago and the enterprise employs

a total of six employees. An Ottawa VRS client was hired and trained as a frames fabricator for this product.

Jeanne Riendeau, a VRS counsellor, said ADUP and the Veoudrys exemplified "excellent training, patience and commitment to one of our clients."

ADUP was presented with a plaque of recognition by the Ottawa VRS office as Employer of the Year.

People on the move

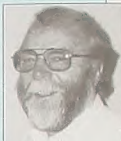
Rose Langhout has been seconded to the Corporate Policy Branch of Strategic Directions Division. Previously Rose was a senior manager in JobLink and before that, she was the manager of Employment Services in the Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities Division. While with Corporate Policy, Rose will manage the development and implementation of a policy framework related to social services restructuring through consultations with internal and external stakeholders.

Russ Stuart comes to the MCSS Information Systems Branch on a secondment from Metro Toronto. He is now project director of social assistance automation. In his new role, Russ will take on responsibility for the continued development and implementation of the casework technology system throughout the province, and the development of JobLink and other social assistance systems.

Don Cornish has retired from MCSS after 26 years in the OPS. He joined MCSS from the Ministry of Health in 1970. Don had been the Hamilton area

manager since 1987; prior to that, he was the administrator of Huronia Regional Centre for 10 years. He was also the district director for Waterloo-Wellington, and was an economist/research coordinator.

Joan Richards has also retired. She left the OPS as a senior policy analyst with the Long Term Care Policy Branch of Ministry of Health (LTC was for a brief time a joint responsibility of MCSS and MOH). She first worked as an occupational therapist and began her career in the OPS in 1973 as a consultant in the MCSS Senior Citizens Branch, then went on to Operational Support and then to the Disabled Persons Branch.



Don Cornish



Joan Richards

Adoption disclosure

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the Child and Family Services Act, which governs adoption, that will: 1) allow access by adult adoptees to the information in the original birth registration this often includes the full name of the birth mother at the time of the birth and the name of the birth father if it was registered; 2) give birth mothers and fathers the right to "veto" any contact with a birth child; and 3) make counselling, which is now required before any disclosure is made, a voluntary act.

Adoption disclosure has become better-known partly because adoptees have formed well-publicized groups, such as Parent Finders, and have lobbied vigorously for the opening of previously-confidential records.

It's difficult to balance the needs of all parties involved in an adoption, the workers agreed. Adoptees generally want more

open records, while some birth parents want records to remain confidential — especially those who placed their children many years ago when societal attitudes were different. The ministry is trying to encourage people to voluntarily place their names on the Adoption Disclosure Register through low-cost advertisements in the "personals" column, and may begin publicizing the register in the syndicated newspaper column, *Today's Child* (which the ministry sponsors), Colette told the workers.

Any adult who has adoption in their family history can put their name on the register. If you are an adult adoptee or birth relative, you may obtain applications and a brochure from your local CAS, or by calling the register at 416-327-4730, where a recorder will give and take information.

Disability issues of interest

Challenge Journal, a half-hour news-style program that focusses on disability issues, begins its third season on June 20.

The 13-part public-affairs series will be seen on TVO on Monday nights at 7 p.m. The host is Ed Wadley, who

uses a wheelchair.

The emphasis of the content is on issues that affect the quality of life for people with disabilities. The show combines documentary style with interviews, and there's a focus on community integration and participation.

Make a note...

Some changes to note in your telephone book:

Payroll and Purchasing have swapped addresses. The Payroll Unit is now part of Human Resources Branch at 2 Bloor St. W., 30th floor, Toronto. Telephones and the payroll fax number (fax is 416-326-8096) remain unchanged.

Purchasing is now on the 6th floor of 880 Bay St., Toronto M7A 2B6. Telephones remain the same, but the fax number 416-

327-0548 is now for the exclusive use of Purchasing. The Purchasing Help Line is maintained on the network to accept inquiries and requests.

Also, last month's organizational chart for Developmental Services Branch inadvertently omitted a name. Norma Smallwood, not Sheila Thakker, is one of the support staff to the policy analysts, along with Lucie Brisson; Norma's telephone number is 327-4992; Lucie's is 327-4991. Doreen Jensen is at 327-4986; branch fax is 325-5554.



dialogue

Dialogue is published 10 times a year by the Communications and Marketing Branch of the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) to provide an information forum for all members of the ministry. The opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect ministry or government policy.

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